

Docket Item # 18
SPECIAL USE PERMIT #99-0082

Planning Commission Meeting
September 7, 1999

ISSUE: Consideration of a request for a special use permit for a change of ownership and an off-street parking reduction.

APPLICANT: Meristar Hospitality Operating Partnership
by M. Catharine Puskar, attorney

LOCATION: 513-625 First Street
Holiday Inn

ZONE: CD/Commercial Downtown

CITY COUNCIL ACTION, SEPTEMBER 18, 1999: Approved the recommendation of the Planning Commission and approved the request, subject to compliance with all applicable codes, ordinances and staff recommendations and the Commission's amended Condition #4 and added Condition #8.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION, SEPTEMBER 7, 1999: On a motion by Mr. Leibach, seconded by Mr. Dunn, the Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of the request, subject to compliance with all applicable codes, ordinances and staff recommendations and to amend Condition #4 and to add Condition #8. The motion carried on a vote of 6 to 0. Mr. Hurd was absent.

Reason: The Planning Commission agreed with the staff analysis, but members of the Commission expressed concern about the availability of on-street parking in the area and recommended that the special use permit be reviewed in one year and docketed for public hearing if there have been problems with parking.

Speakers:

M. Catharine Puskar, attorney representing the applicant, requested that Condition #4 be amended to delete the requirement that the applicant paint the ceiling of the parking garage white. She stated that the applicant did not object to the proposed language of the review condition.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends **approval** subject to compliance with all applicable codes and ordinances and the following conditions:

1. The special use permit shall be granted to the applicant only or to any corporation in which the applicant has a controlling interest. (SUP #97-0127)
2. The applicant shall contact the Crime Prevention Unit of the Alexandria Police Department for a security survey and a robbery awareness program for all employees. (SUP#97-0127)
3. The applicant shall maintain lighting that is a minimum of 2.0 foot candles in the parking lots and garage. (SUP#97-0127)
4. The applicant shall paint the walls in the garage white. (PC)
5. The applicant shall install a controlled access into the garage. (SUP#97-0127)
6. The applicant shall place emergency buttons in the garage. (SUP#97-0127)
7. The applicant shall maintain a minimum of 148 off street parking spaces at all times for guests and users of the hotel. (P&Z)
8. The Director of Planning and Zoning shall review the special use permit one year after approval and shall docket the matter for consideration by the Planning Commission and City Council if he determines that the parking reduction has caused parking problems in the area. (PC)

DISCUSSION:

1. The applicant, Meristar Hospitality Operating Partnership L.P., requests special use permit approval for a parking reduction for the Holiday Inn Hotel and Suites (Holiday Inn) at 625 First Street. Meristar, as the successor to AGH Leasing LP which holds the special use permit for the Holiday Inn, also requests approval of a change of ownership. No development or change in the hotel operation is involved with this application.
2. The subject property is at the corner of North Pitt Street and First Street. It contains two lots of record, with a combined frontage of approximately 295 feet on First Street, approximately 353 feet of frontage on North Pitt Street and a total lot area of approximately 68,000 square feet or 2.29 acres.
3. What is now the Holiday Inn hotel was originally part of the adjacent Olde Colony Inn hotel complex. First constructed in 1957, the original Olde Colony Inn expanded significantly and several times over the years. With each expansion, the City granted approvals in the form of site plan, special use permit and variance approvals. In 1994 the Olde Colony Inn separated its business from what became the adjacent Holiday Inn hotel. In 1997, City Council granted Special Use Permit #97-0127 dividing the City's special use permit for the combined enterprise and allowing each to operate thereafter under its own special use permit. (The Old Colony continues to operate under SUP #1780.)
4. Part of the history of the development and development approval for the site includes parking variances, which allowed the hotel complex to operate with fewer parking spaces than the zoning ordinance. For example, In 1978, by BZA #1722, a variance for 245 spaces was granted allowing the construction of an addition to the Olde Colony Inn on First Street, which later became part of the Holiday Inn. At that time, staff calculated that 459 parking spaces were required for the entire hotel and that the combined lots could provide only 214 spaces. The parking variance was granted. Similarly, in 1985, when the health club facility was added, a complete parking variance, one for 13 spaces, was granted.
5. When the prior parking variances were approved, the city considered all of the uses and all of the parking on the site as common to what later became two hotels. If the Olde Colony Inn site is redeveloped as anticipated, the Holiday Inn use and its parking must be able to stand alone.
6. Staff has reviewed the historical approvals, divided the parking and the variances between the two hotels, and compared the separate allotments to the amount of parking required, concluding that there is a 12 space deficit for the Holiday Inn. This request seeks Council's approval for a formal parking reduction, allowing the Holiday Inn to continue to operate with 12 fewer spaces than are required.

7. The Holiday Inn hotel includes the following functions: It has 178 guest rooms; it has a restaurant with 146 seats; it has a 8,000 square foot conference and banquet center; and it has a small health club facility. Based on the requirements applicable when each of the above functions was built, and the parking variances approved in the past, staff calculates that the hotel today requires 160 parking spaces. Its site includes an underground garage and a surface parking area with space for a total of 148 parking spaces. (See attached parking plan)

8. The finding of a 12 space deficit is based on the following calculation:

178 hotel rooms	
68 (added in 1978) x .7 sp per room = 48 x 18.3%*	= 9 spaces
110 (added in 1985) x .7 sp per room	= 77
146 seat restaurant x 1 sp per 4 seats = 37 x 18.3%*	= 7
Conference center (8,000 sf x 1 sp per 8 seats @ 15 sf per seat)	= 67
Health club (3,000 sf x 1sp per 400 sf = 8 spaces)**	= 0
	Parking required
	160 spaces
Parking provided	148
	<hr/>
Deficit	
	12
	spaces

*245 space variance granted in 1978 (BZA #1722) for 300 space requirement. The Holiday Inn portion of requirement was equal to a 81.7% reduction, for a requirement today of 18.3% of the total.

** total variance granted (BZA 5539)

9. In justification of its request, the applicant states:

“The Holiday Inn has an annualized occupancy rate of approximately 70% which

equates to approximately 125 occupied rooms per night. A number of guests do not arrive in cars, but instead take advantage of public transportation to get from place to place during their stay. Given the occupancy rate and use of public transportation by guests, the 148 spaces available on the Subject Property are adequate to meet the needs of the Holiday Inn. There are times when events held at the hotel are attended by individuals other than guests. During these events attendees are able to find parking on public streets near the hotel. This has been the practice of the Holiday Inn (and formerly the Olde Colony Inn) since it was built.”

10. Zoning: The subject property is located in the CD/Commercial downtown zone. Section 4-503(O) of the zoning ordinance allows a hotel in the CD zone only with a special use permit.
11. Master Plan: The proposed use is consistent with the Old Town North chapter of the Master Plan which designates the property for CD/Commercial downtown use.

STAFF ANALYSIS:

Staff has no objection to the continuation of the hotel use with the slightly reduced parking. The Department of Transportation and Environmental Services recommends that this permit be denied and that the City require the Holiday Inn to provide its full share of parking. T&ES’ rationale is that if the parking is not sufficient, then hotel guests will be forced to compete with residents for the limited on-street parking on adjacent streets.

While Planning staff acknowledges the limited on-street parking in the area and nearby residential users, it notes that the parking reduction involves a small number of cars, relative to the total requirement, and, except for rare occasions, the hotel has been operating with the reduced number of spaces for several years. In fact, there are no additional parking opportunities in the area for the Holiday Inn hotel. If the parking reduction request is denied, the hotel will have to remove either 18 rooms or 48 restaurant seats or some combination of the two to reduce its parking requirement. Given the hardship to the hotel and the history of parking variances for the use, Planning staff believes that, on balance, the City should grant the parking reduction and allow the hotel to continue as it has been operating.

STAFF: Sheldon Lynn, Director, Department of Planning and Zoning; Barbara Ross, Deputy Director.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

Legend: C - code requirement R - recommendation S - suggestion F - finding

Transportation & Environmental Services:

- R-1 Recommend denial per Tom O’Kane. On street parking is limited in the area and restricted for the benefit of residential users. The hotel is surrounded by residential uses that rely on the on street parking.

Code Enforcement:

- F-1 No comments.

Health Department:

- F-1 No comments.

Police Department:

- R-1 The lighting for the garage, surface parking, sidewalks, and all common areas is to be a minimum 2.0 foot candles maintained.
- R-2 The walls and ceilings in the garage are to be painted white.
- R-3 There is to be controlled access to the garage.
- R-4 Emergency buttons in the garage if there is security staff on site 24 hours a day 7 days a wee

